Met Office

March 2005

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A mild first half to the month, but then turning cold with snow over the second half. Mean temperatures generally above average, with the closest to average temperatures over the SE, and the most above average being over Scotland. Rainfall levels generally below average away from eastern areas, with some areas in the south, receiving only around a quarter of their normal rainfall. Many areas in the south, having their fourth consecutive month with below average rainfall.

50 cm of lying snow was reported from Boltshope Park (Durham) and 23 cm from Carterhouse (Scottish Borders), both on morning of 25th. Redhill (Surrey) recorded a temperature of -9.5 °C overnight 27/28th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

The first half of the month was mild with the wind generally from a west or south-westerly direction. However, winter really took hold after the 18th as the wind turned to a north or easterly direction, which brought snow to many places.

1st to 4th. High pressure centred to the west of Ireland dominated the first few days of the month keeping it mostly dry and fairly mild. On the 1st the temperature at Cardiff rose to 14 °C and Boulmer (Northumberland) reached 12.9 °C on the 3rd.

5th to 6th. A cold front pushed into Wales and south-west England on the 5th giving local thunderstorms over Devon and Cornwall, but became quasi-stationary through the 6th before dissipating in situ. Eastern areas of England remained largely dry throughout this period.

7th - 8th. A ridge of high pressure built in from Scandinavia to bring some welcome sunshine to eastern areas, Hunstanton (Norfolk) recording 8.6 hours on the 7th and Weymouth (Dorset) 8.3 hours on the 8th. It also brought the first frost of the month to south-east England and East Anglia.

9th to 12th. This period saw a more unsettled spell of weather with Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recording 33 mm of rain during the day on the 9th and 63.2 mm in the twenty-four hours starting 0900 GMT on the 11th. Some exceptionally mild air on the night of the 11/12th gave south-east England one of its mildest February nights on record, the temperature only falling to 11.9 °C in London. However with the passage of a cold front during the 12th cold air flooded across the area from the north.

13th - 17th. Strong north-westerly winds on the 13th gave gusts of 50 to 60 knots, with Aberporth (Ceredigion) recording the highest at 67 knots. Wintry showers started to affect eastern counties of England but this petered out on the 15th as a ridge of high pressure build in from the south-west. The temperature on the night of the 15th/16th fell to -6.4 °C at Redesdale Camp (Northumberland).

18th to 22nd. The passage of a cold front on the 18th saw Arctic air flood across the area bringing snow to many places, but more especially east counties of England. Fylingdales (North Yorkshire) reported 8 cm of snow on the morning of the 21st and daytime temperatures only reached 0.8 °C at Buxton (Derbyshire) on the 22nd.

23rd - 25th. Blizzard conditions occurred over eastern England bringing 20 to 30 cm of snow over the Pennines. By the morning of the 24th there was 37 cm of lying snow at Boltshope Park (Durham), and 50 cm by the morning of the 25th. Seven centimetres was reported from the Dover area on the 24th. During this period south Wales and the West Country remained dry with spells of sunshine.

26th - 28th. The cold weather continued during the end of the month with further snowfall over eastern and central areas of England. Up to 15 cm of snow fell in parts of Kent during the night of the 27th/28th and air temperatures that night fell to -9.5 °C at Redhill (Surrey). It was also cold by day with Wattisham (Suffolk) only reaching 1.2 °C on the 27th and Sennybridge (Powys) 0.2 °C on the 28th.

Scotland diary of highlights

Mild first half, cold second half with some snow.

On 1st February a large anticyclone to the south-west of Ireland directed a mild north-westerly airstream over Scotland. Cloud broke up over the southern half of Scotland to give a sunny day with the temperature reaching 13 °C at Strathallan. Conditions became more unsettled during the next few days as the high moved slowly south, allowing fronts to cross the country. There was 22 mm of rain at Dalmally on the 3rd and 32 mm at Tyndrum on the 4th, and it remained very mild.

A brief spell of colder air extended over Scotland from the north on the 5th and 6th. There were sunny periods in the south-west but rain in the north-east.

Milder westerly winds returned between the 7th and 11th as a deep depression near Iceland moved into the Norwegian Sea. Its associated front brought rain on the 8th and 9th, with a two-day total of 73 mm at Tyndrum, and winds gusted to 73 mph at Sella Ness on the 10th. Another depression moved across southern Scotland on the 11th, bringing more rain with 29 mm at Dundrennan on the Solway coast.

Northerly winds spread south in the rear of the low and persisted until the 15th. The winds were strong at first and brought wintry showers to the north but gradually the pressure rose and winds became lighter. Much of Scotland enjoyed a sunny day on the 15th.

Milder air from the west returned for the next two days, with weak fronts bringing slight rain on the 16th and a ridge giving a fine day in the south on the 17th.

Northerly winds returned on the 18th as a depression moved into the Norwegian Sea, but over the next few days this transferred south to the Mediterranean and high pressure became established over high latitudes. Winds over Scotland turned into the east on the 21st and snow showers that had been affecting the north transferred to the east. Snow depths on low ground were fairly modest but reached 23 cm at Carterhouse in the Borders by the 25th. The west and north-west experienced mainly clear conditions with the temperature falling to -10 °C at Altnaharra.

On the 25th and 26th winds remained in the north-east but it became less cold and the showers died out. A ridge of high pressure moved slowly south across Scotland to give a fine day in the west on the 27th, with fronts pushing a band of light rain south on the 28th.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Mild at first, then colder, especially during the last week.

The 1st to the 3rd were mostly cloudy. Some patchy light rain and drizzle occurred at times, especially in the north. It was very mild with day-time temperatures in the range 9 to 11 °C.

Although dry and locally bright at first on the 4th rain spread eastwards to all areas and became locally heavy by evening.

The 5th and 6th were bright days with some sunshine but it was cooler and some locally sharp night-time frosts occurred and some patchy freezing fog.

The 7th to the 10th was a mixed period with cloudier periods and some occasional rain, interspersing with brighter skies and scattered showers. It was relatively mild and mostly frost-free.

The 11th was cloudy and rain spread east to affect all areas. It turned into the wettest day of the month and many places recorded around 15 mm of rain.

The 12th and 13th was a much brighter weekend but it became very windy and northerly gales developed, severe over exposed coasts of Londonderry, Antrim and Down were gusts 65 to 75 m.ph. were recorded. Some trees were felled and power cuts occurred locally.

The 14th to the 19th was often bright with some wintry sunshine and just scattered showers but nights were cooler with local frost.

From the 20th onwards it turned colder as winds turned to an east or north-easterly direction. Indeed it was the coldest week of the winter for many. Snow fell widely to a depth of 2 or 3 cm on the morning of the 21st and the following days were bright but cold with sleet or snow showers. Day-time temperatures often struggled between 3 and 6 °C and overnight frost was more widespread than at any time during the winter.

The month overall was still a little milder than the long-term average, despite the cold during the last eight days. It was a dry month overall and sunshine amounts increased with some parts of Co Down seeing around 125% of the average for February.

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